

## **A Regulatory Agency Perspective on Anthropogenic Noise and Marine Mammals**

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### **Abstract**

MMS administers about 7,500 active leases on 40 million acres of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). The OCS makes a significant contribution to the national energy supply, providing 25 percent of the natural gas and 30 percent of the oil produced in the United States. The MMS carries out its mission of managing OCS mineral resources through a variety of efforts: estimating national OCS energy resources; assessing environmental impacts; funding research to assess and manage impacts of activities and to monitor changes in the quality and productivity of the marine environment; leasing OCS acreage; analyzing and permitting proposed actions; inspecting operations; enforcing statutory and regulatory requirements; and providing scientific and technical assistance to other nations.

The MMS protected species program involves complying with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA); analyzing impacts; designing mitigation, monitoring guidelines and management approaches; and providing information necessary for promulgating regulations; and identifying, funding, and participating in research necessary for the protection and enhancement of protected species and their habitat.

MMS has focused two programmatic environmental analyses (under the National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA]) on noise producing activities (seismic surveys and explosive removals of offshore structures). The programmatic environmental assessments characterize activities and the environment in which they occur, document potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures, and evaluate proposals.

To avoid or reduce the potential impacts of noise MMS, implements mitigation measures (based on NEPA analyses, ESA consultations, and MMPA collaboration) through a variety of mechanisms including regulations (30 CFR Part 250 - Oil and Gas and Sulphur Operations in the Outer Continental Shelf) that implement provisions of the OCS Lands Act (U.S. Code Title 43, Chapter 29, Subchapter III), lease stipulations, and notices to lessees (which clarify requirements addressed in our regulations).